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SUBJECT: INSTRUCTION - U.S. SECURITY COUNCIL INTERVENTION  
ON WOMEN PEACE AND SECURITY

(U) This is an action request: USUN is instructed to draw from the points below during the UN Security Council open debate on Women and Peace and Security scheduled for October 29, 2008.

BEGIN TEXT

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The United States appreciates the opportunity to address the Council on the vital role that the international community plays in empowering women. The United States reiterates its commitment to prevent the use of sexual violence as a tactic of warfare. And, we must continue to build upon current momentum to ensure the full participation of women in peace processes and increased representation of women at all decision-making levels of the United Nations.

First, it is imperative that the United Nations and the international community continue to keep the issue of women, peace, and security in the spotlight in order to bring about change. Rape is a crime and sexual violence has a grievous moral and psychological impact -- destroying not just the lives of individuals and families ... but communities and entire societies. Through greater awareness and action, however, the international community is responding. For example, in recent months, the Congolese government, in conjunction with organizations like the American Bar Association and the United Nations, has instituted capacity building programs that have contributed to a decrease in sexual violence and dramatic increases in prosecutions. Even so, women, especially in rural villages, are not safe as chaos and war continue to threaten this trend. Thus, protection and assistance for victims of sexual violence in situations of armed conflict remains an essential part of the solution.

The United Nations has taken laudable steps but must continually do more, particularly to eradicate sexual exploitation by peacekeepers and to ensure that peacekeepers respect the communities in which they work. The UN must also must do more to factor the issue of women, peace, and security into development portfolios across various sectors, including health, education, democracy and governance, and economic growth. Human trafficking, especially in conflict situations, where women and girls are often abducted by militia and turned into slaves or war wives must also continue to be addressed.

This is why the attention of the Council on this issue is so important. Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 address sexual violence and exploitation in conflict situations more forcefully than ever before and Resolution 1820, in particular, requests that the Secretary-General report on specific situations in which sexual violence has been widely or systematically employed against civilians in such situations. The United States is pleased that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) -- with its expertise on conflict situations -- will be contributing to the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of this Resolution.

We recommend that DPKO draw upon the inter-agency resources of the UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict, so that a wide range of experts and observers in the field can gather the sensitive and sometimes elusive information that will be necessary to identify and combat sexual violence as an instrument of war.

Second, we must also dramatically increase women's participation in all aspects of building peace and security. Security Council Resolution 1820 recognizes and highlights the need for these essential contributions, but also points out that there is not adequate participation by women in peace negotiations and processes. The United States believes that ensuring the full participation of women in peace processes as well as increased representation of women at all decision-making levels is a proactive approach to getting to the root of the challenges we face on the issue of women, peace, and security. Empowerment of women in leadership will garner results-oriented outcomes, but only when their participation is substantive and institutionalized, rather than ad hoc and marginalized.

Positive steps have been taken. For example, in 2006, several dozen female Foreign Ministers and other high-ranking officials from around the world, including U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, formed the Women Leaders, Working Group. The Group works to ensure that the issues of women's political participation, access to justice, economic empowerment, poverty reduction, combating violence against women, and women in conflict and post-conflict situations are international priorities. And it has made efforts to promote the appointment of senior women as Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and Special Envoys.

Last May, the U.S. launched a public-private partnership called the 'One Woman Initiative' that focuses on women's entrepreneurship, political leadership, and the rule of law. The project is initially focused on women in countries with significant Muslim populations. The U.S. Government and private donors have provided \$100 million in funding, and the first grants will be awarded this November.

Also this year, the U.S. hosted a Senior Roundtable for Women's Justice, where judges from around the world discussed women's lack of access to justice and best practices to combat violence against women and improve women's legal enfranchisement. As a result of this roundtable, the cosmetics company Avon Products contributed \$1 million to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women, and this fall the United States will provide training to 23 Malawi federal judges on issues related to violence against women.

With regard to UN activities, the U.S. welcomes the conclusions of the Secretary General's report, which states that the deployment of women in the field facilitates engagement with local women which leads to more access to appropriate services for women and girls and lowers the incidents of sexual violence and abuse. We also applaud efforts by nations such as Jamaica in attaining an equal number of women and men in their UN peacekeeping contingents.

The United States would also like to commend Secretary Ban for his leadership and commitment to increasing the number of women candidates for UN Special Representative and for Special Envoy positions. At present, 15 of the 37 UN Senior Leadership positions are held by women, including Jane Holl Lute -- Assistant Secretary General for Peacebuilding Support, Margaret Loj of Denmark -- the Secretary General's Special Representative (SRSG) in Liberia, and Rhadika Coomaraswamy ) the SRSG for Children and Armed Conflict. The United States hopes that these appointments will continue to increase and that empowerment issues become more prevalent in country-specific reports in the Council.

At the same time however, women continue to be

underrepresented in peace negotiations. According to a forthcoming UNIFEM report: only 2.7% of signatories of 15 sample agreements they reviewed were women. Where information on negotiations was available, there were no female lead negotiators; and women,s participation in negotiating delegations averaged 7%. The United States looks forward to working with Council members and the international community to increase these opportunities.

With the adoption of UNSCR 1820, the Council signaled its belief that it understands that when women are empowered, societies can be more prosperous and entire communities can be changed together and for the better. In today,s world, no country can achieve lasting success, stability, and security when half its population is sitting on the sidelines. The United States looks forward to continuing to share our best practices and experiences and to institutionalizing women,s participation in building peace and security.

Thank you.

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